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Who's Who in Coaching: Who Shaped It, Who's Shaping It

Vikki G. Brock

Coaching, as a profession, rapidly gained recognition and acceptance in the past decade. Yet many professional coaches display little or no understanding of the foundation upon which the professional coaching field rests. In addition, publicly and within the field, there is considerable misinformation about the history of the early years of coaching.

What is known is that coaching is a consolidation and amalgamation of many fields and the integrative thinking of great pioneers. In its short history, we have seen considerable focus on recognizing the major distinctions between coaching and disciplines such as therapy, mentoring and consulting. Now is the time to recognize the foundation and roots that coaching has in these and other related disciplines.

My contention is that the current state, in part, results from a lack of awareness or recognition of the history of coaching. If the coaching field can be envisioned as a tree, without knowing its roots, how can the trunk be strong and the branches grow and thrive? What little is known about the history is open to debate; there is no definitive, documented or agreed upon history available.

As part of my dissertation research I sent out a survey to at least 10,000 coaches to determine the key influences on the coaching field, be they individuals, professions or other factors. Evidence from the survey responses, coupled with interviews and a literature search, suggest the following: (a) coaching evolved from professions first recognized after 1850; (b) the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s influenced coaching, and (c) most influencers are published authors and/or founders and leaders in coach training programs.

Introduction

This study was undertaken as part of dissertation research. As Patrick Williams, a key player in the coaching field, stated to The Royal Society of Medicine in London, United Kingdom on January 30, 2004:

> Coaching, while the latest and hottest trend to invade the workplace, is not really new. It is a new derivative of the best thinking in self-improvement since the turn of the 20th century. Coaching found its place in history, and most recently in the business world, when it exploded into the corporate environment in the 1990s. Today, workplace coaching includes dozens of specialty fields (just like medicine) for every kind of business concern including personal career coaching; transitions and mergers coaching; start-up venture and entrepreneurial coaching; executive leader coaching; team coaching, and, what many call, life coaching. Coaching exists for every type and size of business from the self-employed sole proprietor to huge

coaching programs within the top Fortune 500 companies… Coaching has proven a worthy investment during its short but remarkable history. (Williams, 2004)

Coaching integrates the substance of many fields and the innovative thinking of great pioneers. Since 1995 the field has grown from two coach training schools to 180; from three professional associations to nine; and from zero magazines or journals focusing on coaching in the year 2000 to eleven in 2005 (Carr, 2005). The coaching field, still in its infancy, seeks to establish itself as a separate and unique field from the disciplines, which formed it. Much divergent thinking about what coaching is and whose approach is best exists within the field. Outside the field even more confusion exists among clients and the public as to what constitutes coaching. I propose that by looking to the well established and researched professions that influenced the development of coaching, we can build on the evidence-based research that exists for these professions as a foundation for advancing coaching as an evidence-based profession.

As Irene F. Stein (2004) wrote:
Certainly, a field of coaching studies would draw its roots from many existing bodies of theory - just as most new fields arise from previous knowledge… [Figure 1] is a model that depicts the trunk of a tree as the set of theories and practices that are common to different coaching applications… I define the field of coaching studies as the whole tree from just below ground-level, a big part of our work as researchers and scholar-practitioners is to define the trunk that is supporting the whole tree. The stronger the trunk, the more bountiful the branches can become." (p. ix)

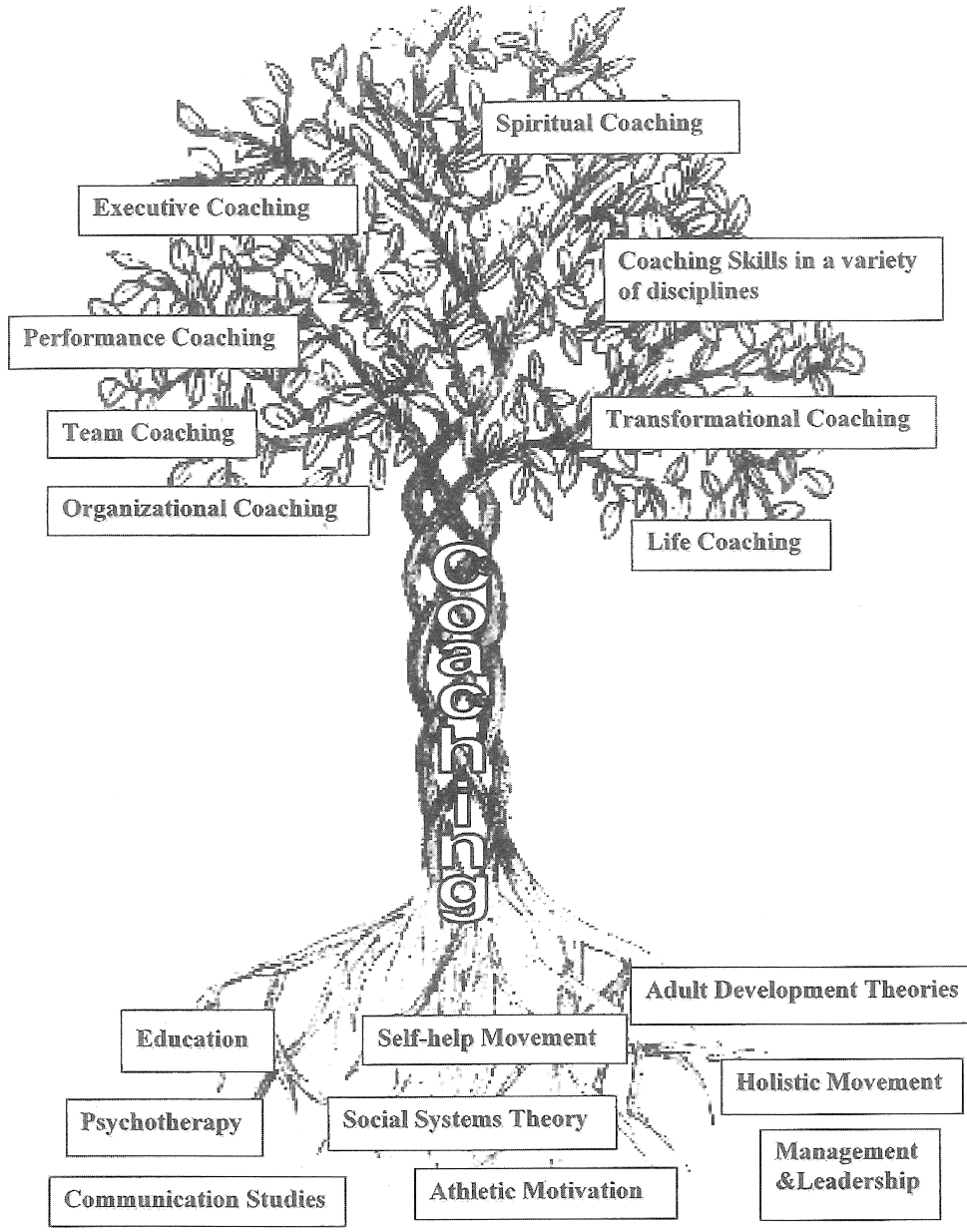
As the coaching field develops and matures, we must know where we came from (our roots) and how we got to where we are today (our trunk and branches). Perhaps the most compelling case for understanding our past is presented by Allison (1995) in this observation: "The point is that who we are as humans, our very concepts of reality, is determined by our histories, by what the past has handed down to us. And those who are most ignorant of their history are the most controlled by it because they are the least likely to understand the sources of their beliefs. They are the most likely to confuse their inherited prejudices with Truth" (p. xiv). This survey is the beginning of a process to understand the history of the field of coaching.

Methodology

Survey

The main purpose of this survey was to identify the key influences on the coaching field, be they individuals, professions or other factors. The author made the decision to limit the number of questions to a size, which would keep the response time to 15 minutes. Six questions were designed to gather demographic data. Eight core questions, listed in Table 1, are grouped by training and background, professional memberships and affiliations, and influencers. Generated questions were a mixture of yes/no, multiple

Figure 1: The field of **Coaching Studies:**
Draws from many "roots" and supports many "branches"



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choice, and fill in the blank, which were critiqued by a select group of coaches and researchers prior to inclusion in the survey. SurveyMonkey™ was used to administer the survey with access and context provided through the www.coachingwhoswho.com website.

Table 1: Core Survey Questions

Grouping	Questions
Training and Background	• What related professional organizations are you a member of? • Where have you received your coach training? • What are your coaching niche / specialty areas?
Professional Memberships and Affiliations	• What are top five professional coaching associations/service organizations in priority order? • In priority order, what are top five professions that have influenced and/or contributed the most to the coaching field?
Influencers	• Who are the most influential professional coaches of all time? • What individuals do you see as currently shaping and/or redefining the coaching field? • What individuals, in a related profession, have contributed the most to establish professional coaching?

Survey participants were provided with examples of ten professions such as psychology and education and instructed they could select from the examples or add their own. The responses were then weighted according to the priority they were assigned by the respondent. This resulted in a percentage of weighted influence for each profession.

Respondents were asked to prioritize the influence of professional coaching associations and service organizations. They were provided with 23 examples and instructed they could select from the examples in the list or add their own. Responses that named non-professional organizations (such as coach training organizations) were removed. The remaining responses were weighted by their influence priority level and items receiving more than one vote total were grouped.

The survey distribution strategy relied on key contacts from professional organizations, academic institutions, and leaders within coaching and related professions. A short survey email request was developed to link people to the website and subsequently to SurveyMonkey™. The core questions were added to the email and website in response to respondent's request, as well as a statement that "this study meets the guidelines for research with human subjects". Respondents were also allowed to leave contact information separate from their responses so they could receive the survey results without compromising their anonymity.

The survey listed 185 different coaching programs, as well as, a place to write in the names of schools not in the original list.

The survey request was sent out between September 1 and December 31, 2005 to professional coaches, coach training schools and educational institutions, coaching professional organizations, professional organizations in related professions, and significant purchasers of coaching. The researcher made email requests to over 300

individuals, groups and organizations that may be duplicated in the numbers below. There was duplication in the research requests in that one person could be on more than one distribution list (for example the researcher is on six of the lists below). SurveyMonkey™ was set up to allow only one response per email account. The following major groups made official research requests:

- Coachville (announced in ezine to 55,000 members)
- International Coach Federation (bulk email to 9,300 members)
- International Association of Coaches (announced in ezine to 7,100 members)
- Coach Inc (announced in ezine to 7,000 students/alumni)
- College of Executive Coaching (bulk email to database of 4,700 individuals)
- Peer Resources Network (announced in bulletin to members)
- Coaching Insider (announced in ezine to 3,700 subscribers)
- European Coaching Institute (announced in newsletter)
- UK Coaching and Mentoring (announced on website)
- Landmark Education (bulk email to 350 group leaders)

RESULTS

General Respondent Information

The geographical array of the 1,310 survey responses closely aligns with the membership distribution of The International Coach Federation (International Coach Federation, 2005) and The International Association of Coaches (International Association of Coaches, 2005) as of December 31, 2005. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the survey responses were from North America, 18% from Europe and the remaining 16% from the rest of the world. Respondents to the survey, ICF and IAC members, predominately speak English as a first language and share the same limitation with respect to geographical representation.

From the general information supplied we know the following:

- 86% identified themselves as professional coaches
- 75% of coaches had coached over three years
- 15% did not have English as their first language
- 80% were 40 years and older
- 10% were 60 years old and older
- 95% received education beyond high school
- 69% received graduate level education
- 66% indicated they worked in a profession related to coaching

Summarizing the general respondent data we can infer that coaches tend to be highly educated (69% had graduate level education) and mature (80% were 40 years or older) individuals who use coaching as one of the methods to support change in individuals and groups (66% indicated they worked in a profession related to coaching).

Individuals Influencing Coaching

Combining the results of the all-time, emerging and other professions influencers we find that 56 of the top 57 names appear in all three categories. The clear leaders are Thomas Leonard with 8% and Werner Erhard with almost 6% of responses when combining all three categories.

Table 2: All Influencers

Name	Total	Book	School
Thomas Leonard	8.0%	The Portable Coach	Coach U, Coachville
Werner Erhard	5.9%		est
Cheryl Richardson	2.2%	Take Time For Your Life	Coach U
John Whitmore	2.2%	Coaching for Performance	
Laura Whitworth	2.1%	Co-Active Coaching	Coach Training Institute
Marshall Goldsmith	2.0%	Coaching for Leadership	
Dave Buck	2.0%		Coach U, Coachville
Anthony Robbins	1.9%	Awaken The Giant Within	Anthony Robbins Companies
Julio Olalla	1.9%	From Knowledge to Wisdom	Newfield Network
Steve Zaffron	1.9%		Landmark Education
Timothy Gallwey	1.5%	Inner Game of Tennis	
Laura Berman-Fortgang	1.4%	Now What?	Coach U
Stephen Covey	1.2%	7 Habits of Highly Effective People	
Henry Kimsey-House	1.1%	Co-Active Coaching	Coach Training Institute
Anthony Grant	0.9%	Solution-Focused Coaching	University of Sydney
Harry Rosenberg	0.9%		Landmark Education
Frederic Hudson	0.8%	The Handbook of Coaching	Hudson Institute
Karen Kimsey-House	0.8%		Coach Training Institute
Patrick Williams	0.7%	Therapist as Life Coach	Institute for Life Coach Training
Joe Dimaggio	0.7%		Landmark Education
James Flaherty	0.7%	Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others	New Ventures West
Randy McNamera	0.7%		Landmark Education
Nancy Zapolski	0.6%		Landmark Education
Jeffrey Auerbach	0.6%	Personal and Executive Coaching	College of Executive Coaching
Sandy Vilas	0.6%	Becoming a Coach	Coach U

By grouping the top 25 names from Table 2, representing 45.3% of responses, into related groups based on core theoretical models or disciplines we find that:

- Human Potential Movement (est, Landmark Forum, Coach U, Coachville, CTI) influencers hold 14 of the top 25 positions for 30.1,% of the total responses. Names include Thomas Leonard, Werner Erhard, Dave Buck, Cheryl Richardson, Laura Whitworth, Steve Zaffron, Laura Berman Fortgang, Henry Kimsey-House, Harry Rosenberg, Joe Dimaggio, Nancy Zapolski, Karen Kimsey-House, Randy McNamera and Sandy Vilas.
- Psychology and Adult Development total 4.9% and include Anthony Grant, Anthony Robbins, Jeffrey Auerbach, Patrick Williams and Frederic Hudson
- Sports totals 3.7% and includes Sir John Whitmore and Timothy Gallwey
- Management totals 3.2% and includes Marshall Goldsmith and Stephen Covey
- Philosophy (Ontology) totals 2.6% and includes Julio Olalla and James Flaherty

Separating the results we find:

All-Time influencers

All-time influencers include almost 700 different names. The top 15 names on this list account for 46% of the responses. Thomas Leonard with 11.3% is the only influencer to garner double-digit percentage recognition. Werner Erhard, founder of est (the precursor to Landmark Education), is second at 6%.

Emerging influencers

Emerging influencers are defined as people who are on the cutting-edge of the profession, those whose words or actions are surprising or thought-provoking. Almost 600 different names were identified as emerging influencers in coaching. The top 37 names, led by Werner Erhard and Dave Buck, had 45% of the responses.

Related profession influencers

Respondents identified almost 900 different names of influencers on coaching who came from related professions. The top 37 names, garnering 85% of the responses, is headed by Thomas Leonard with 9.2% and Werner Erhard with 6.7%.

Professions Influencing Coaching

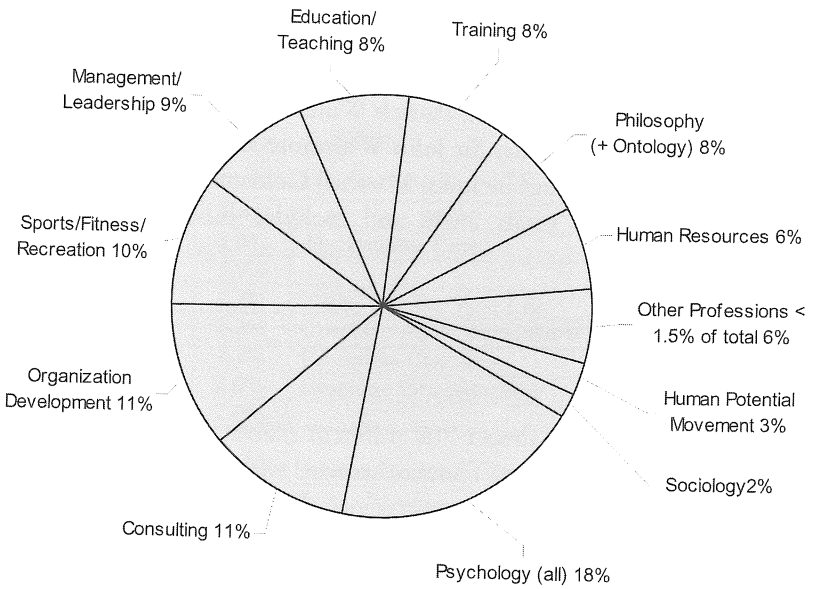
Combining the results from related professions influence and organization membership we see psychology and organization development in the top four of both lists.

Related Professions Influence on Coaching

Psychology with 19.4% was identified as the profession, which most influenced coaching. Consulting with 11% is the second most influential profession followed by Organization Development with 10.9% and sports/fitness/recreation with 10.1%. The fifth most influential profession is management/leadership at 8.7%.

Figure 2 shows the full results for the top professions influencing coaching.

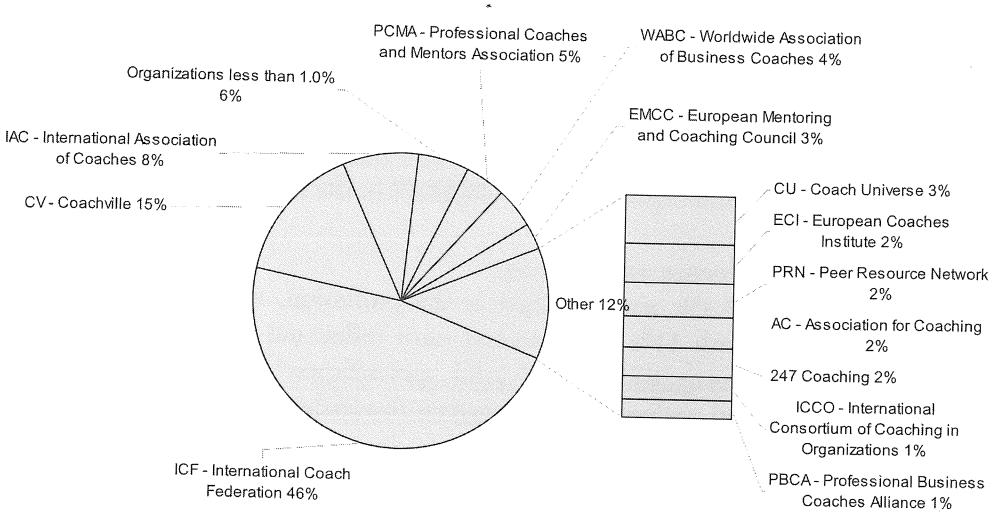
Figure 2: Professions Influencing Coaching



Related Professional Organization Membership

The intention was to determine coaching related professional membership. Respondents in many cases were members of more than one organization. The ten professions listed in Figure 3 represent 70% of the organizations of which respondents are members.

Figure 3: Professional Organizations Grouped by Related Professions



The top four professional organizations identified were United States based and accounted for 40% of the total responses. These were the American Society for Training and Development (14%), the Society for Human Resource Management (10%), the Organization Development Network (8%) and the American Psychological Association (8%).

Coach Training and Professional Organizations

The top four coach training and top three professional organization rated most influential received their philosophical foundation from the Human Potential Movement through Thomas Leonard, Laura Whitworth, and Werner Erhard.

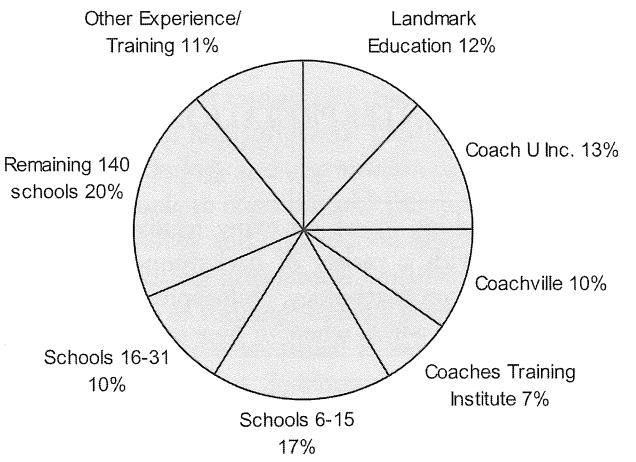
Coach Professional Organizations

The top five professional coaching organizations received 79.4% of the votes. They were the International Coach Federation (ICF) (47.0%), Coachville (14.5%), the International Association of Coaches (IAC) (8.1%), Professional Coaches and Mentors Association (PCMA) (4.6%), and Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) (4.3%). In total, 13 professional coaching and service organizations received at least 1% of the responses and represent 94.5% of the total responses. Approximately 6% of the responses named Canadian-based organizations, 11% named European-based organizations, and the rest named United States-based organizations.

Coach Training

Respondents in many cases attended more than one program and 177 discrete names had at least one response. The top 30 schools received 70% of total responses. As shown in Figure 4, Coach U Inc (comprised of Coach U and Corporate Coach U) ranked the highest, followed closely by Landmark Education.

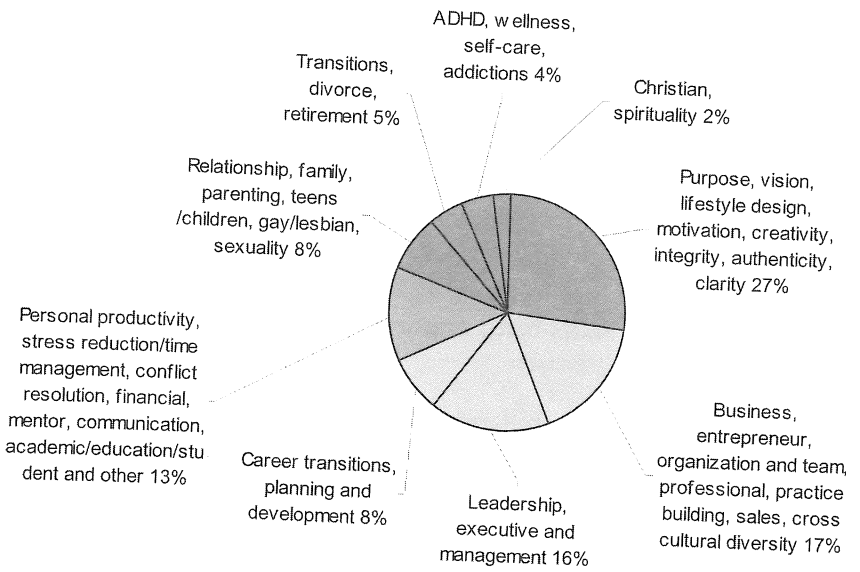
Figure 4: Coach Training



Coaching Niche and Specialty Areas

Of the 55 different coaching specialty areas no one area counted for more than 6.5% of total responses. Respondents in most cases identified more than one specialty area. In Figure 5, business related specialties (light gray) represented 40.5% and personal related specialties (dark gray) represented 46.7% of the total responses. Responses that fell into both work and personal categories (medium gray) represent the remaining 12.9% of total responses.

Figure 5: Coach Specialty and Niche Areas


ADHD, wellness, self-care, addictions 4%
Transitions, divorce, retirement 5%
Christian, spirituality 2%
Relationship, family, parenting, teens /children, gay/lesbian, sexuality 8%
Purpose, vision, lifestyle design, motivation, creativity, integrity, authenticity, clarity 27%
Personal productivity, stress reduction/time management, conflict resolution, financial, mentor, communication, academic/education/student and other 13%
Business, entrepreneur, organization and team, professional, practice building, sales, cross cultural diversity 17%
Career transitions, planning and development 8%
Leadership, executive and management 16%

Coaching Specialty Areas are balanced approximately evenly between business and personal. This is not surprising as many coaches take a holistic perspective and do not demarcate between business and personal. Specialty and niche areas are often viewed as a means to attract clients rather than a description of focus for the coaching.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

What do the data tell us?

The data confirm that coaching draws on many related professions and the field benefits from key individuals with a variety of backgrounds. Literature research and interviews support strong roots from psychology, philosophy, sports and management, as well as a lack of clear agreement on when, where or how coaching began and evolved.

Individual Influencers

The Human Potential Movement of the 1960s significantly influenced coaching.

Thirty percent (30%) of the individual influencers had direct roots in this movement, particularly the large group awareness programs. From Table 1 we know that 56 of the top 57 individuals identified as key influencers appear in all three survey categories of "emerging", "all-time" and "from related professions". From this consistency I might infer the respondents are answering based on name recognition or seeing only one type of influencer. A search conducted on Amazon.com and on Google revealed that most of the top influencers have published at least one book or are key players in a coach training organization. Thus, name recognition may be a factor in responses to the to the key influencers questions. Since coaching became widely known in the early 1990s, most of the all-time influencers recently came to coaching from related professions.

Influence from Related Professions

Coaching is influenced by a variety of relatively new professions, each of which contributed something important to coaching (Wikipedia, 2005-6). These related professions form a web of roots, which support the trunk of coaching, as we know it today, allowing numerous branches with many leaves to thrive.

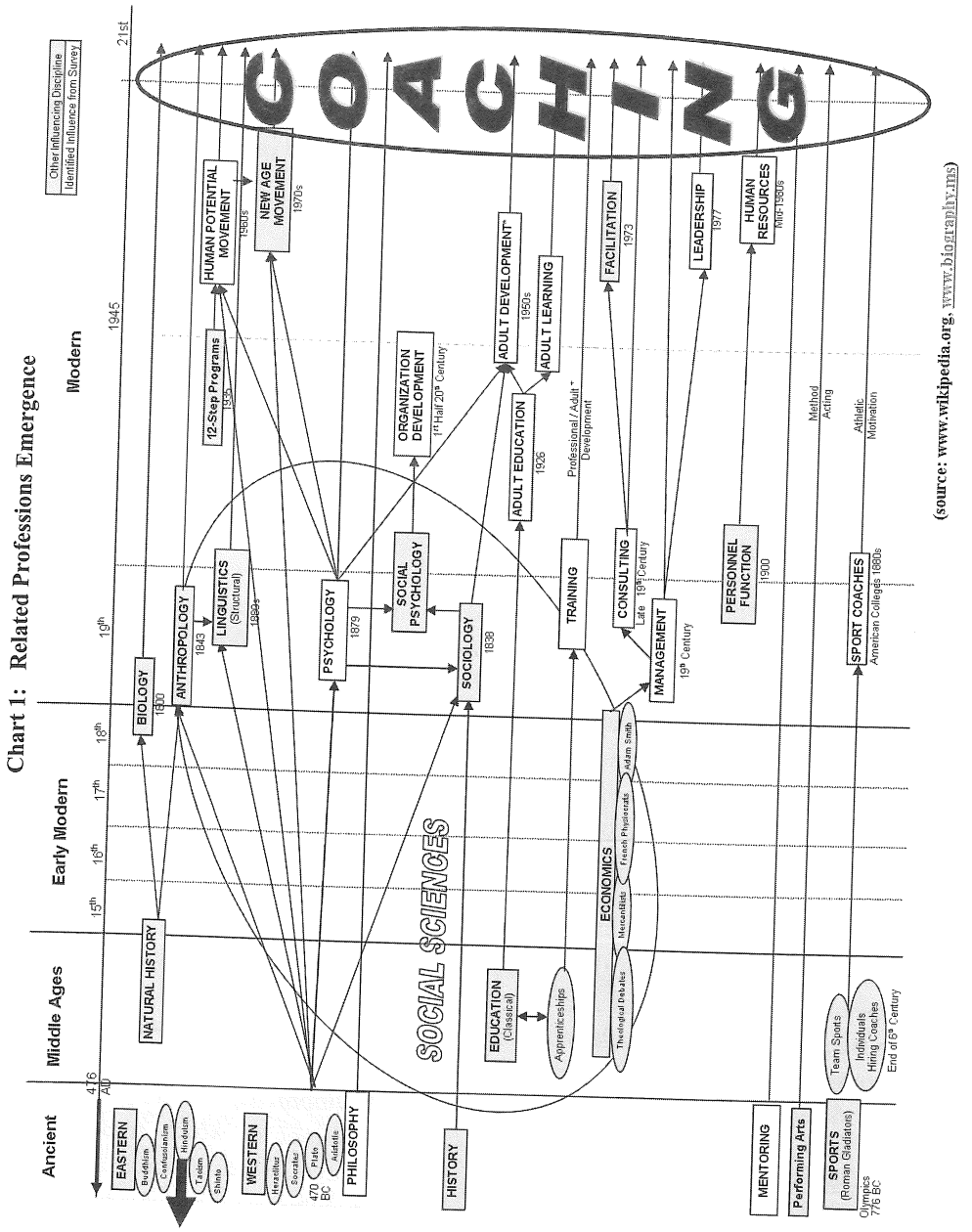
From the literature search and results displayed in Chart 1A, most of these and other professions influencing coaching were recognized between the mid-19th century and the mid-20th century (Wikipedia, 2006).

Coaching emerged in the late 20th century and is undergoing a similar developmental path as that of sociology when it emerged in the early 19th century:

> The beginning of sociology is typical for the formation of a new science in that there was a multitude of different attempts about what sociology should be and do. In the view back, these struggles are filtered by the criterium of success and influence. Whereas the theories of Weber, Durkheim and Marx (and quite a few others) are still used in sociology today, there were other perspectives which are neither well known nor used today, sometimes even if they bear interesting ideas for today. In the end, sociology did not replace the other social sciences, it became another discipline with its own particular emphases, subject matter, and methods. (Biography.ms, 2006)

Some of this is evidence of the transitional crossing over found in the 50% overlap in the professional organizational and influential field responses. It is interesting that the overlap is in the fields of psychology and organization development. Notwithstanding that many compare coaching people to coaching athletes, this suggests that the strongest roots lie in the disciplies of psychology and organization development.

The top four non-coaching professional organizations of which respondents are members are from the fields of training, human resources, organizational development and psychology, yet the professions identified as most influencing the coaching field are psychology, consulting, organization development and sports. While we could debate whether consulting is a profession, Christopher McKenna's (2006) states the case that management consulting is indeed a profession. Management consulting uses an expert



model while organization development uses a process model based on the work of Edgar Schein (1998). The question of whether consulting is a "how" or a "what" can be also be asked of coaching. The results suggest that membership in a professional organization is related to and not necessarily indicative of the influence of a specific profession.

Coach Training and Professional Organizations

Here we see the influence of the Human Potential Movement. Specifically the "unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and non-directive" focus of Rogerian psychology (Biography.ms, 2006) and self-responsibility focus of Werner Erhard's est (Carroll, 2006). Over 30% of the respondents attended a program founded or influenced by Thomas Leonard (at one time an employee of Werner Erhard) or Laura Whitworth (trained by Thomas Leonard). Almost 70% of the respondents are members of the ICF and/or IAC, both founded by Thomas Leonard.

When looking at the roots of coaching from outside the United States we see a greater influence of psychology and human resources as evidenced by the coaching interest groups recently formed within psychology and human resources in the United Kingdom and Australia (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006; Australian Psychological Society Interest Group Coaching Psychology, 2006; British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology, 2006).

Where do we go from here?

As we look to what is next there are several survey limitations and biases to keep in mind. The survey was in English only, was distributed primarily to coaches, required Internet access to complete, and contained several groups of background questions which were not clear enough to yield valid data. The author is conducting additional research, which includes contacting the key influencers for follow-on interviews to document their links with the evolution of the international coaching field. Specifically I continue to explore:

- Related professions and key concepts used in coaching
- Geographical spread of coaching
- Key influencers and what influenced them
- Coaching cultures in contemporary organizations
- Why coaching and why now

This initial study has certainly provided some concurrence with Irene Stein's tree (2004). Specifically the roots of organization development and psychology show very strongly in the respondent's information. Further information will help to expand and refine that model. Further information might include researching the impact of beliefs about humans on coaching effectiveness, competencies and proficiencies for coaches, migrating evidence basis from related professions to coaching, and future of coaching as a profession.

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